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## **CITY OF WOODSTOCK FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

### **OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the City of Woodstock's Façade Improvement Program is to encourage projects which contribute to the economic revitalization and historic character of the downtown area by providing financial and technical assistance for facade and other related improvements. Funding for the Façade Improvement Program comes from revenue generated by the downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district.

The City will budget funds for façade improvement funding annually. Façade funds will be awarded on a merit basis. Façade program information and project applications will be coordinated by the City Planner (Façade Improvement Coordinator) through the Building and Zoning Department.

The Façade Improvement Program may be used along with other state and federal incentives when applicable.

### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

All projects within the Downtown Business Historic Preservation District must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Woodstock's Downtown Design Review Guidelines.

Funding award amounts are at the discretion of the City and will be based on the merits of the project and the amount of funding that has been budgeted.

The Façade Improvement Program is a reimbursement program. Funds will be reimbursed by the City only after all authorized work is completed, inspected and approved and only after all contractors and/or subcontractors (e.g., architects, suppliers, etc.) have been paid by the applicant. Façade funds are only applicable to work that begins after an application has been approved.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Overall Eligibility: The Façade Improvement Program is statutorily limited to properties located in the downtown TIF district.

Eligibility for Commercial Projects: The owner or responsible tenant (with consent of owner) of any building within the TIF district may participate in the Façade Improvement Program. Buildings used in whole or part for commercial purposes are also eligible for a reimbursement grant for rear entrance improvements if they also meet all of the following criteria:

1. The building must have an existing rear entrance that is accessible to the public from a dedicated public street, alley, or other right-of-way, or from a parking lot or walkway that is owned or leased by the City, or from other property that is encumbered by an easement granting public pedestrian access; and,
2. The rear entrance to be improved must provide public access to a business or businesses within the building.

Eligibility for Residential Projects: The owner of any residential building within the TIF District may participate in the Façade Improvement Program.

**Participating property owners and tenants must not be in default of any municipal fees, taxes, etc., and must not have any outstanding building, zoning, or city code violations on any properties owned and/or occupied by them within the corporate limits of the City of Woodstock. Also, Façade Improvement Program applicants who have applied for, but not received, funding in previous fiscal years will be considered first-time applicants and will be given priority consideration. After all first-time applicants are processed, the remaining applicants will be considered in the order that they are received.**

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

- Projects receiving façade improvement funds must be visible from a public way.
- Projects must conform to the Historic Preservation Commission's Design Review Guidelines and a Certificate of Appropriateness must be approved, if required by City Code (if the property is located within the Downtown Business Historic Preservation District).

### **Eligible Projects/Activities/Costs:**

- Design professional fees
- Actual construction costs
- Architectural or structural engineering services for façade improvements (reimbursed after construction of the project is complete)
- Removal of inappropriate features (such as removal of vertical siding, synthetic siding, modern awnings)
- Restoration of missing or altered features (such as restoring original bricked over openings, storefront details)
- Installation/restoration of upper story historically appropriate architectural features (such as cornices and windows)

- Installation of traditional awnings
- Masonry restoration or repair
- Painting (painting of masonry only if it already has been painted, or with the approval of the Historic Preservation Commission)
- Maintenance and preservation of historic signs
- Construction of accessibility improvements to the exterior of the building
- Only costs incurred **after** the execution of the façade improvement funding agreement are eligible for reimbursement. Any costs incurred and/or work performed **prior** to an approved agreement **are ineligible**.

**Ineligible Projects/Activities/Costs:**

- Building permit fees and related costs
- Extermination of insects, rodents, vermin and other pests
- Sidewalks – replacement of private sidewalks, except as specified above in conjunction with entrance improvements
- Title reports and legal fees
- Elevators – repair or installation
- Interior floor or ceiling replacement and repair
- Plumbing
- Sprinkler systems
- Working capital for business
- Landscaping
- Mechanical equipment
- Painting masonry that was not previously painted
- Façade improvements, flat roofs, or other work not visible from public spaces
- Parking lot improvements
- Refinancing existing debt
- Sweat equity
- Acquisition of land and/or buildings

**Other improvements not specifically listed as eligible or ineligible are subject to review by the Historic Preservation Commission as an advisory body and consideration by the Woodstock City Council.**

**APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

Early coordination is important. Potential applicants are encouraged to schedule a pre-application meeting with the Façade Improvement Program Coordinator. Depending on the scope of the project, the coordinator may schedule a pre-application design discussion with the Historic Preservation Commission and or other city staff.

Applications will be reviewed by city staff including the Finance Director, Building and Zoning Director, City Planner, and Economic Development Director along with the Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission (for projects in the Historic District) who will make recommendations to the City Council.

Improvements to historic commercial structures on the square, on the perimeter of the square, or along gateways to the square, will have the highest priority.

Projects will be evaluated utilizing the following factors:

- Impact of proposed work on preservation of the structure
- Aesthetic impact (location of improvement, magnitude of improvement)
- Consistency with announced special emphasis areas (if any)
- Applicant's demonstrated previous commitment to preservation
- Thoroughness of application
- Equity (has applicant previously received façade funding)
- Demonstrated financial capability of applicant
- Funding availability/feasibility

Projects must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness for proposed work, if required by City Code. Category 2 Major Projects as defined in section 7.7.2 of the Woodstock City Code projects must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Recommended projects will be forwarded to City Council for approval.

Minor changes in scope may be approved by the Façade Improvement Coordinator. Major changes will require the applicant to re-apply for funding.

A Façade Improvement Agreement for the use and distribution of funds must be executed **prior** to commencement of any work. In addition, the maximum amount of the reimbursement grant for a specific property will be set forth in the Façade Improvement Agreement between the City and the property owner or tenant. If the actual costs exceed the original final estimates submitted with the application and used to determine the final total amount of reimbursement within the Agreement, the property owner or tenant will be responsible for the full amount of the excess. **The City cannot reimburse more than the total amount specified in the Agreement.**

## COMPLETION OF WORK

All improvements must be completed within 180 days of the execution of the Façade Improvement Agreement, unless otherwise authorized by the City Manager. A maximum extension of one year may be granted if justified by the particular circumstances. If the work is not completed by the end of the extension, the City's obligation to reimburse the owner or tenant for the project is terminated. Each property address/property identification number is eligible for one (1) Façade Improvement Program reimbursement grant unless an application and award is made for front façade and rear façade projects.

Upon completion of the façade improvements, the funding recipient must schedule a final inspection and submit invoices validating project costs. Project costs/expenditures are subject to audit by the City of Woodstock.

Reimbursement is subject to Federal and State Taxes and is reported to the Internal Revenue Service on a form 1099. Recipient will be required to provide Taxpayer ID number or Social Security Number as part of the Façade Improvement Program award. Property owners and tenants should consult their tax advisor for tax liability information.

The property owner and tenant will be responsible for maintaining the façade improvements without alterations for a period of five (5) years unless otherwise approved by the City Manager of the City of Woodstock.